IS IT "EFFLEURAGE" OR "STRYKNING"?

Comments on the Notations by Pehr Ling

By Patricia J. Benjamin, Ph.D.

A careful reading of the translation of Pehr Ling's *Notations* to the *General Principles of Gymnastics* reveals the nature of Swedish manual treatment as Ling intended it to be, and uncovers some misconceptions we have had about his work. (1) The most striking revelations concern his use of the Swedish language, his classification of techniques, the specificity of his treatment, and the direction of the movements.

The Swedish Language. Current histories of manual treatment, which commonly describe Ling's system using French terms, may wish to revise their texts in light of new evidence that Ling actually used the Swedish language exclusively in his work. There are no French terms used either in *The General Principles of Gymnastics* or in the *Notations* to that larger work. The French terms, including the word "massage" itself, were mistakenly attributed to Ling long after his death in 1839.

Tradition holds that Pehr Ling used the French terms "massage," "effleurage," "petrissage," "friction," and "tapotement" to describe this system of manipulative therapy. In an article in the *Physical Therapy Review* in 1952, Gertrude Beard reports that:

> *In the early part of the nineteenth century we see a definite change in terminology, evidently due to the influence of Peter Ling of Sweden, in the beginning of the use of French terms. Ling, to whom credit has been given as the originator of the Swedish system of massage traveled widely over all Europe and incorporated the use of the French terms, effleurage, petrissage, massage a' friction, and tapotement into his system.* (2)

Considering this traditional belief, it was amazing to find that there were no French terms used in the *Notations* written by Ling either to denote soft tissue manipulation in general, or to describe any techniques. Ling refers to his system of treatment as a whole as "medical gymnastics" and to the techniques within medical gymnastics as active, active-passive, and passive movements (passiva rorelserna). He used all Swedish words to describe a total of about nineteen separate techniques. If Ling did not, in fact, use French to describe his system of manual treatment, how did the misconception get started?

In her article, Beard frequently describes Ling's soft tissue techniques as if quoting from a work by Ling himself. Actually, her source of information was cited as a book written in 1890 by Arvid Kellgren, *The Technique of Ling's System of Manual Treatment.* (3) This was written fifty years after Ling's death by a man who had learned "Ling's system" from Ling's sucessors at the Central Institute. Kellgren himself offers some clues as to what might have happened:

> *It is supposed by many that what nowadays goes under the name of massage is one thing and Ling's system is another. This is an entire mistake, for the massage manipulations are only a few of the passive movements contained in Ling's system. That this is the case anyone may see for himself, if he will read what Ling and his immediate successors have written. It is, on the other hand, quite true that the medical profession in Sweden, disregarding their own native institution, have "gone over the river to fetch water," and have learnt the massage movement from Metzger or his pupils.* (4)

Is it possible that it was actually Metzger who introduced French terms to describe what Ling called passive movements? This theory is supported by the opening paragraphs of a chapter on massage from the sixth edition of *Massage and the Original Swedish Movements* written by Kurre Ostrom in 1905.

> *Dr. Metzger, of Amsterdam (now practicing in Wiesbaden, Germany), and his two pupils, the Swedish physicians Berghman and Helleday, were among the first to apply massage treatment scientifically. Their method is now used throughout Europe... Dr. Metzger divides*

the massage treatment into four principle manipulations: 1. Effleurage, 2. Frictions, 3. Petrissage, 4. Tapotement. (5)

Similarly, Anders Wide credits Metzger with introducing French terminology to describe massage, and alludes to the confusion over the nature of massage and Swedish medical gymnastics. While soft tissue manipulation had always been a part of Ling's medical gymnastics, they were used along with other passive movements to treat specific medical conditions. Remember that Ling did not differentiate between soft tissue movements and joint movements, but called them all "passive movements" when the patient was at complete rest.

Metzger, evidently, isolated the soft tissue manipulations that did not involve joint movement, and called them "massage." It appears that at some point late in the 19th century, people forgot that Ling's medical gymnastics included both soft tissue manipulation and joint movement. Metzger's massage was then mistakenly thought of as different from Ling's system, which was more well known for the active and passive joint movements, i.e., the Swedish movements.

Most of the movements used in the practice of Massage, have always had their equivalents in Swedish Medical Gymnastics, as has before been pointed out, but massage-movements are somewhat differently given, so, for this reason, the most important of them are treated of here for the sake of completeness. I here avail myself of the first complete description of the massage-movements that Dr. Metzger uses. This description was given by the Swedish physicians, Doctors G. Berghman and U. Helleday in the Nordiskt Medicinskt Arkiv, Vol. v. No. 7, Stockholm 1873.

"Concerning the purely technical part of the treatment, or the manipulations themselves... Metzger names them, from what has been reported, after the French Massage-terminology. The different kinds of manipulations we saw him use, he called Effleurage, Massage a Friction, Petrissage and Tapotement." (6)

The evidence is strong that Ling himself did not use French terms to describe the passive movements in his system of medical gymastics, the forerunner of Swedish massage. No French words were found in the *Notations*. In addition, it appears that the Swedish physicians in the late 19th century who adopted the use of soft tissue manipulation for treating disease, actually learned their technique from Metzger, who did use French terms.

It seems that by the latter 19th century, Metzger's

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classification of massage technique was being used in Sweden. It was at this time that books about massage and the Swedish movements began to appear in English. Many of these books on the "Swedish system" used Metzger's terminology (i.e. French terms), and therefore, the use of French terms was mistakenly attributed to Ling, who was strongly associated with the development of Swedish manual treatment.

Classification of Technique. In his *Notations,* Ling did not classify the passive movements into four categories, but described nineteen different techniques, and alluded to many more variations of these. The following chart shows the Swedish terms used by Ling in the *Notations* and their closest English equivalents.

SWEDISH	ENGLISH
1. Akning	1. Riding
2. Armskakning	2. Arm shaking
3. Balrullningar	3. Rolling of the trunk
4. Bindning	4. Binding
5. Darrning	5. Vibrations
6. Hackning	6. Hacking
7. Klamning	7. Squeezing
8. Klappning	8. Clapping
9. Lyftning	9. Lifting
10. Nypning	10. Pinching
11. Rullning	11. Rolling (passive range of motion)
12. Ringning	12. Ringing
13. Skakning	13. Shaking
14. Strykning	14. Stroking
15. Stupning	15. Tilting
16. Tryckning	16. Pressing
17. Utratning	17. Straightening
18. Valkning	18. Kneading
19. Vinkling	19. Angling (bending)

Ling did not try to simplify his classification of techniques into four categories as Metzger did (i.e. effleurage, petrissage, friction and tapotement). Ling also included movement of the joints among the passive movements, making his system a combination of soft tissue manipulation and passive range of motion.

Specific Treatment. In Ling's system of medical gymnastics, the passive movements were used to treat specific conditions of disease in the body. And so, in the *Notations,* Ling describes which techniques are recommended to be used on specific body parts. There is no mention of a "general massage." The following chart lists Ling's suggestions for affecting different parts of the body. *(note # 17)* *

BODY PART	TECHNIQUE
1. Head and trunk	Passive range of motion
2. Neck	Stroking, pressing, vibrations
3. Head	Hacking, shaking, stroking, pressing
4. Organs of the chest	Clapping, stroking, shaking, lifting, and combinations of these movements
5. Organs of the abdomen and pelvis	Rolling, pressing, double-sawing, and clapping
6. Spine	Stroking, hacking
7. Extremities	Clapping, range of motion, stroking, kneading
8. Blood vessels	Pressing, stroking
9. Nerves	Pressing, stroking

Direction of Movement. It is generally believed that Ling taught that the direction of movement during massage should always be toward the heart. However, in the *Notations,* Ling talks about direction in terms of the "abnormal part" being treated. Movements would be made either on the abnormal part, toward the abnormal part, or away from the abnormal part. This reemphasizes the point that Ling was describing very specific medical treatment and not a general massage. *(note # 18)*

Miscellaneous Notes. There are several smaller points of interest about the *Notations* and Ling's medical gymastics that are worthy of mention. For example, Ling advocates the use of oil to decrease the skin friction for some passive movements, but notes that in some cases (i.e. manipulation of inner abdominal organs) oil can be a hindrance. *(note #15)*

He also mentions the "starting positions" of the patient during the passive movements. *(note #18)* in Ling's medical gymastics, the patient was not always lying on a table, as with the Swedish massage familar to us today. It was common for the patient to be standing, kneeling, sitting, lying, or even hanging from a suspended bar. Taylor lists several variations of these five basic positions including 1. Fall-standing (the whole body inclined at an angle), 2. Bent-standing (trunk is bent at the middle), 3. Short-sitting (seat rests on the edge of the chair), 4. Long-sitting (legs are extended horizontally in the same plane with the seat, while the trunk is erect), 5. Sidewise-lying (lying upon the right or left side), and 6. Trunk-lying (trunk only is supported while the legs project beyond the supporting surface).

Because the patient might be in any number of positions depending on the treatment to be given, the medical gymnast's office not only had a padded table, but also has chairs, stools, leaning posts, vertical ladders, and suspended bars and poles.

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*Refer to Notations to the General Principles of Gymnastics.

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Sometimes the passive movements required more than one operator. Ling mentions movements that called for assistants, e.g., "ringing, rolling of the trunk, tilting, etc., in union with lifting and shaking..." *(note #17)*

Ling described the passive movements as "carried out with the hand's own form differences alone, and seldom with the help of external means." But he also acknowledges the use of machines for certain movements; for example, "shaking can be done...through machines that shake with a rotary motion." *(note #15)* Again in note *#20,* he talks about shaking machines, e.g., vippmast, which can be adjusted to give individualized treatment to the patient.

Medical Model. Ling's system of manual treatment was obviously a medical system for treating illness, disease and orthopedic problems. He calls his system "medical gymastics," and says that "by means of medical gymastics, an attempt is made to reestablish the unison which should exist between the various parts of the organism which has been lost owing to the latter's abnormal condition." (9) Ling's medical gymastics was a natural alternative to regular medicine of the time.

Section Four of the *General Principles of Gymnastics* is called "The Principles of Medical Gymnastics," and describes the theory of the manual treatment. In that section, Ling explains the general use of active, active-passive, and passive movements to treat a variety of illnesses, i.e., of the nervous system, circulatory system, secretion system, muscular system, skin and fever, and skeletal system. He also discusses the "quantity" and "quality" of the medical movements, but does not describe techniques specifically. (10)

It should be noted that at the time that Ling's medical gymastics came to this country in the late 19th century, the Royal Gymnastic Central Institute in Stockholm had a rigorous training course for medical gymnasts. After all, they were treating disease, and therefore, "practicing medicine" in an era before strict regulation of medical practice. In 1890, William Murrell describes this training in his book "Massotherapeutics or Massage as a Mode of Treatment."

> *The instruction [at the Central Institute] is carried out thoroughly and systematically, and medical men wishing to obtain a certificate of competency are required to devote three years to the work. No one is allowed to practice unless duly qualified, and no patient is admitted for treatment unless furnished with a prescription or recommendation from his physician... The curriculum includes anatomy, physiology, hygiene, pathology, mechanics, and theroretical gymnastics. The practical work begins at eight o'clock in the morning and is carried on in classes with short intervals of rest, until three o'clock in the afternoon. (11)*

Medical gymnasts trained at the Central Institute in the late 19th century had extensive clinical practice, and were also trained in educational and military gymnastics.

Final comment. Ling's system of medical gymnastics was the forerunner of Swedish massage as we know it today. With the translation of Ling's *Notations,* we have a description of that system from the founder himself. Reading the *Notations* is instructive, and has cleared up some misconceptions about this early system of manual treatment. The *Notations* does not tell us what massage therapy should be today, but it does give us a point of departure from

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which to trace the evolution of Swedish massage through the 19th and 20th centuries to the present. The *Notations* is fascinating reading mainly because it lets us learn about Ling's system from Ling himself, and not as filtered and distorted by different writers through the decades.■

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